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ABSTRACT

In Connecticut, the state department of education participates in the preparation of two reports--both required by statute--on department activities. This paper describes how the form and substance of these reports have evolved into a mechanism that facilitates the planning, management, and evaluation of departmental programs. A mandated reporting format is described that allows for an examination of program goals, objectives, and activities, as well as the planning of future programs. (Author/LD)

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THE PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND EVALUATION OF STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS: SOME GUIDELINES

Effective planning, management, and evaluation of State Department of Education programs and activities are essential to the delivery of a wide range of services to Local Educational Agencies. The politics of this charge, however, are almost as formidable as the methodological questions. In Connecticut the State Department of Education participates in the preparation of two reports on department activities. Both are required by statute, and both are submitted formally to the Governor and to the General Assembly. This paper describes how the form and substance of these reports have evolved into a mechanism which facilitates the planning, management and evaluation of departmental programs. A reporting format is described which allows for an examination of program goals, objectives and activities, as well as the planning of future programs.

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THE PLANNING, MANAGEMENT, AND EVLAUTION OF STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PROGRAMS: SOME GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

The Connecticut State Department of Education participates in the preparation of two reports describing departmental activities each year. Both reports are required by statute, and both are submitted formally to the Governor and to the General Assembly (specifically, the Joint Standing Committe on Education), as well as released to the public at large.

"Summary of Department Activities"

Section 10-4 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires the State Board of Education to submit "... to the Governor ... and to the General Assembly ... a detailed statement of the activities of the Board." This report is a condensed version of the Annual Report, which is described below.

"Annual Report"

A second report is prepared in response to certain statutes first passed in the 1971 General Assembly and subsequently revised. These statutes require a substantial part of the activities of the department to be evaluated and reported, including: experimental projects; bilingual, disadvantaged and child nutrition programs; special education; occupational and vocational education; and all federally funded programs.

Prior to the current fiscal year (1978-79) these reports were developed as an end of the year (June) activity. Employing previous methods and reporting schedules, these documents served a singular purpose. Namely, the recapitulation of program activities which occurred the preceeding year. Instituting a new reporting format and schedule for submission, we hope to transform the "Annual Report" into a tool which could facilitate the planning and management, as well as evaluation of Department programs.

THE SCHEDULE OF REPORTING

The departmental plan for preparing the "Annual Report" involves a single schedule and reporting format, but requires two submissions, a preliminary submission (Round One, Phases I & II) and an updated final submission (Round Two).

ROUND ONE

Phase I: July Submission

The first phase of Round One occurs in July, the first month of the state fiscal year. This submission presents initial information concerning program need, goals, objectives and activities. It includes a Bureau introduction which describes the major foci of the current fiscal year. Following the Phase I review process, the reports will be returned to the appropriate department personnel for program monitoring (see Schedule For Preparation).

Phase II: June Submission

The 2nd Phase of Round One occurs in June of the following year. This submission contains both the initial information submitted in Phase I, and preliminary data concerning program impact and finances which are based on estimates made by consultants/program managers and Bureau Chiefs.

These narratives, and the accompanying estimates, are for the use of the Associate Commissioners in compiling summaries of division activities, and for the use of the Commissioner's Office in writing the "detailed statement of activities ..." and other information as mandated in Section 10-4.

ROUND TWO

Updated Final Reports

Preliminary reports are updated by Units, Bureaus and Divisions of the department and submitted in final form by September 22. These updated final reports contain correct indicator and expenditure data for the year.

The updated set of reports is used to produce a draft "Annual Report," which is submitted to the December meeting of the State Board of Education and, if approved, it is printed and forwarded in final form to the Governor and General Assembly on or before February first.

These reports are the responsibility of the program manager, Bureau Chiefs, and Associate Commissioners who supervise and administer the Units in which the programs are managed. Essential to meeting the deadlines in the schedule is the close supervision of those responsible for writing the reports by the Bureau Chiefs and the Associate Commissioners.

DEPARTMENTAL ORGANIZATION AND REPORTING FORMAT (SCHEDULE FOR PREPARATION)

The Connecticut State Department of Education is organized into 5 Divisions, 12 Bureaus and approximately 75 Units. A unit may have one or more program functions.

Each Division must submit a Division Summary which is prepared by the Division head. These summaries are in narrative form and include the following sections.

INTRODUCTION: A statement of purpose, or "mission", of the Division.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS: A brief narrative statement of no more than six major accomplishments of the past year, preferably stated in relation to State Board Goals where appropriate, and in relation to Division "mission."

SUMMARY STATISTICS: This section should present in tabular form key data which indicate the direction and impact of Division programs. Each Division must include a personnel statistic (filled and vacant positions as of June of the current fiscal year).

Each of the 12 Bureaus must submit a Bureau Summary which is prepared by the Bureau Chief. These reports are in narrative form, and include the following sections.

INTRODUCTION: A brief overview of the Bureau's "mission" and a description of the major functions of each unit or program.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY: A statement of Bureau expenditures, including the Bureau Chief's office and all other units or programs of the Bureau. The bureau financial summary does not present expenditures for each program separately, but rather in aggregate form.

On the program or unit level, each Unit must submit a Program/Unit Report. These program or unit level reports are more detailed than the Division and Bureau summaries. The program/unit report is composed of seven sections which are described below.

I. NEED is an account of the conditions that lead to the establishment of the unit and its programs or make such establishment desirable. It might include an estimate of the number of children who need to be served. Where Connecticut and/or Federal statutes spell out specific needs to be met, the statutory reference should be cited.

II. GOALS are to be identified for each Unit (or program). These may be state Board goals, student behaivor goals, goals from Section 10-4 of the Ct. General Statutes, and/or goals stated in relation to procedures, or administration, of schools or school districts. Program/ Unit goals should relate to or reflect Bureau and/or Divisional goals.

III. OBJECTIVES are steps in the direction of goals. When an objective is reached, a new or different objective will be formulated, closer. to the goal; or the goal will be reconsidered, and perhaps reformulated. Objectives should be grouped according to whether they are (a) product-oriented or (b) process-oriented. The proportion of objectives falling into the product oriented category or the process oriented catagory will vary among units depending on their purposes and functions. However, the total number of objectives should not exceed four (4) for any one program, or ten (10) for any one unit.

(a) Product-Oriented or management objectives: Management objectives should indicate priority concerns of the program/unit for the current year. These objectives pin point a product to be produced or a target to be achieved (e.g., a 25% increase in ... over last year).

(b) Process-oriented objectives: These objectives should relate to continuing activities of the program or unit which can be reflected in numbers or statistics.

IV. DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM ACTIVITIES is a general presentation of major activities. It might include mention of the number and kind of staff, what they do, with what kinds of groups or individuals, etc.

V. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

A. Product Oriented

Products (produced; or in process) - Targets (achieved or in practice)
The number of product oriented performance indicators will vary according to the number of product oriented objectives.

B. Process Oriented

Statistics (numbers or frequency counts)
The number of process oriented performance indicators will vary according to the number of process oriented objectives. These statistics should not include such detailed data as number of telephone calls, unless this number is a very important indicator of the program's effect/impact.
Performance indicator data are to be displayed for the year of the report and for the previous two years. If this is a new indicator, show dashes (--) for the previous two years.

VI. SUMMARY EVALUATION is a narrative account of the achievement or shortcomings of the program. This section should address the following questions:

(a) Are there trends evident in your statistics? What do these trends mean in relation to the need stated above?

(b) What did the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives do in relation to the need - reduce it, change it, meet it wholly or partially?

(c) How do you know this -- i.e., do you have any evidence of program impact (as distinct from an impression, feeling, belief, etc.)?

VII. FINANCIAL REPORT shows the distribution of funds, i.e., personnel and grants (given out) and the sources of those funds, i.e., state, federal and other.

DISCUSSION

Unit and program activities are initiated, in effect, over the summer months (June, July and August). During these months, the Department's professional staff engages in the review of last year's activities, as well as the planning of current year activities. This procedure was recently formalized through the initiation of the Professional Staff Planning and Evaluation Program.

Thus, the planning process can be traced to the setting of individual objectives and tasks, which are then reviewed and edited, if needed, at the Bureau Chief level. Building upon each consultant's plans, the unit coordinator or program manager prepares a list of Unit objectives which reflects the current year's operation.

Employing the restructured format for the "Annual Report" (described above), each unit coordinator or program manager now begins planning on another level. At the Unit level objectives are reviewed, prioritized, and restated in product or process terms. The consideration of performance indicators, which will ultimately be used to judge whether Unit objectives have been accomplished, is an important aspect of the planning process at this level. The planning and evaluation cycle is completed with the review of performance indicators, and the preparation of a summary evaluation and financial data at the end of the year. Thus, we have attempted to take a mandated reporting function and design a format which embraces the planning, management, and evaluation of Department programs.

The process outlined above is not without its problems, however. Perhaps the biggest problem is that, at present, no formal monitoring system exists. Thus, if a consultant or unit experiences a shift in responsibilities, due to reorganization or whatever, there is no way to insure that proper adjustments will be made in terms of their unit objectives. If these adjustments are not made the integration of performance indicate data becomes difficult, if not impossible. And, hence, the evaluation of unit activities becomes tricky at best - not to mention the fact that the Bureau's "mission" statement may now be inaccurate.

Another problem is that currently Bureaus and Divisions are not required to formulate specific objectives, although there are Bureaus that engage in this activity. In order for this planning, management, and evaluation

process to be truly comprehensive, the inclusion of statements concerning need, goals, objectives, and etc. may be necessary at these higher levels.

Finally, there appears to be some degreee of reluctance to formulate objectives in produce terms. It is difficult to assess, at this point, whether this phenomenon is related to the newness of the system and a lack of experience writing objectives, or other factors. However, this area has been receiving a good deal of attention, and some progress has been noted this year.